

REMARKS

Reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested for the following reasons:

1. Numbering of Claims

In accordance with item 2 on page 2 of the Official Action, the listing of claims presented above is numbered from 19-33 rather than 18-32.

2. New Issues, . . . , etc.

The amendments to claims have been made to clarify the meaning of “charged” and “until.” In particular, whereas original claim 19 recited that “the second storage device is not charged until the lower-capacity first storage device has been charged,” amended claim 19 recites that –the second storage device is not charged until after the lower-capacity first storage device has been charged to a preset voltage–. It is believed that this amendment does not change the meaning of the claim, or necessitate a new search, but rather that it makes the claim easier to understand. Therefore entry and consideration of the amendment is respectfully requested.

3. Rejection of Claims 19-33 Under 35 USC §102(b) in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,160,377 (Fujii)

This rejection is respectfully traversed on the grounds that the Fujii patent fails to disclose or suggest a charging device in which a second, higher capacity, storage device is not charged until after a first, lower capacity, storage device has been charged to a preset voltage.

The purpose of the claimed invention is to enable ensure that at least one storage device is ready for use in as short a time as possible, by giving charging priority to a faster charging first storage device. Once the first storage device is charged to an acceptable level, the higher capacity but slower-charging second storage device can be charged. The key is that only the first storage device is charged at first, the second storage device only being charged when the first

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storage device has been charged to an acceptable (preset) level. This is especially useful in solar cell systems where the voltage source is intermittent and/or unreliable.

Original claim 19 specifically claimed this feature of the invention, by reciting:

*... wherein the second storage device is **not** charged **until** the lower-capacity first storage device has been charged and is available for low voltage output.*

Amended claim 19 recites the timing between charging of the first and second storage device even more clearly, by reciting:

*... wherein the second storage device is **not** charged **until after** the lower-capacity first storage device has been charged **to a preset voltage** and is available for low voltage output.*

The Fujii patent, on the other hand, does not recite any temporal relationship between charging of the first and second storage devices, as recited in both the original and amended claim 19, nor does the Official Action discuss this key feature of the claimed invention.

Instead, the Fujii patent merely discloses a charging device in which, as explained in the Official Action, the charge output is supplied to first and second charge paths. According to the flowchart of Fig. 5, if battery pack A is loaded and not fully charged, then the controller charges pack A (ST14), checks whether pack B is connected (ST15), checks whether pack B is charged (ST16), and starts charging pack B (ST17). The control procedure shown in Fig. 5 does not wait for pack A to be charged before proceeding to charge pack B. Instead, the only effect of pack A being charged to a preset voltage is to skip the step ST14 of beginning charging. The Fujii patent does not even remotely suggest **not charging pack B until after pack A has been charged**, nor is there any reason to do so since there does not appear to be any difference, such as lower capacity and faster charging, between packs A and B of Fujii.

Because the Fujii patent neither discloses nor suggests a charging device that holds off on charging a higher capacity battery until the lower capacity battery has been charged, it is

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respectfully submitted that the Fujii patent cannot possibly anticipate the claimed invention, and that the rejection of claims 19-33 under 35 USC §102(a) is therefore improper.

Having thus overcome each of the rejections made in the Official Action, withdrawal of the rejections and expedited passage of the application to issue is requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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